Freedom, Kentucky Story

My name is John Robert Miller. I am 80 years old and I am writing this account on September 30, 2003. When I was a small child, my Grandmother Miller told me about how Freedom, Kentucky which is about 12 miles south of Glasgow on Highway 63, was renamed. It is about halfway between Glasgow and Tompkinsville, Kentucky. The trail was so rough before the turn of the century that it took two days to go from Tompkinsville to Glasgow with a loaded team and wagon.

My grandmother was raised in this area. And they lived in a house that was adjacent to the old store and the freedom tunnel that I am writing about. The house is now occupied by the Isaac Gosser family. It was close by the old barn where the slaves slept at night. Freedom, she said, was originally known as "Black Walnut."

Their farm was at Black Walnut, Kentucky. My grandmother's family would board travelers and their animals there at the farm and they would stay all night and then go on to Glasgow the next day . In the middle 1800's, there were slaves in the area and some folks wanted slaves and others didn't. My grandmother's family didn't believe in keeping slaves or slavery. The William Henry Jones family didn't believe in slaves either since this area of Kentucky that they lived in was a no man's land torn between the

North and South. As I have stated Freedom was originally called "Black Walnut." There was a school there and in 1855 the first Post Office was started there at "Black Walnut." There were many people that wanted to free the slaves so they tried to find a way to help the slaves since the area between Tompkinsville and Glasgow was hilly and there were a lot of draws, which were well hidden ravines. It was easy to move from one place to another. They found a tunnel under the trail there at "Black Walnut." And they decided it would be a good place for the slaves to hide until someone from the North could come and get them and take them back up North. The Kentucky terrain made it easy for the slaves to move around at night and hide from those who would be after them.

My Grandmother said it was hard to have enough to eat because the North would steal their food and the South would also steal their food. They had to hide it to keep it from being stolen by both sides.

There were several black families in the area. My grandmother's family had blacks working for them but there were also share croppers. They could go and come as they pleased. There were also several black families that were freed by the help of the North and South after the Civil war was over. After all this activity, someone came up with the idea of renaming "Black Walnut" Freedom because of all the blacks that got their freedom

there. So in 1866, they renamed the Post Office "Freedom" and the Post Office was in the store. There at Freedom, William Henry Jones Sr. and his brother-in-law Mr. Button ran the store and post office. Mr. Jones and Mr. Button decided to make coffins to sell to the public. They made them out of black walnut lumber and lined them with satin. They were the nicest coffins around. They were also the only store for three miles. Then in 1887, William Henry Jones, Jr. was born at Freedom. Later, they moved to Glasgow and President Teddy Roselvelt named Mr. Jones as Post Master in Glasgow. Mr. Jones Sr. and Mr. Jones, Jr. started the "Glasgow Republican" newspaper. That paper was something that all rural people looked forward to reading.

Then after Mr. Jones left Freedom, the store and post office were run by Claud Price. After he passed away his son, John Robert Price, ran the store and post office until 1952 when the post office was closed.

My Grandmother Miller was married to John J. Miller who passed away in 1914. He was born in 1851. He was born, lived and died in the same community and owned several farms. He was a hard working man and was a religious man. But, I never got to see my grandfather. Grandmother Miller passed away in 1936. (My Grandmother Miller lived with my mother for a month at time after my grandfather passed away).

He and Grandmother Miller had ten children:

Lizzie Cash

Ella Atkinson

Chris Miller

Henry Miller (My Father)

Lucy Norvell

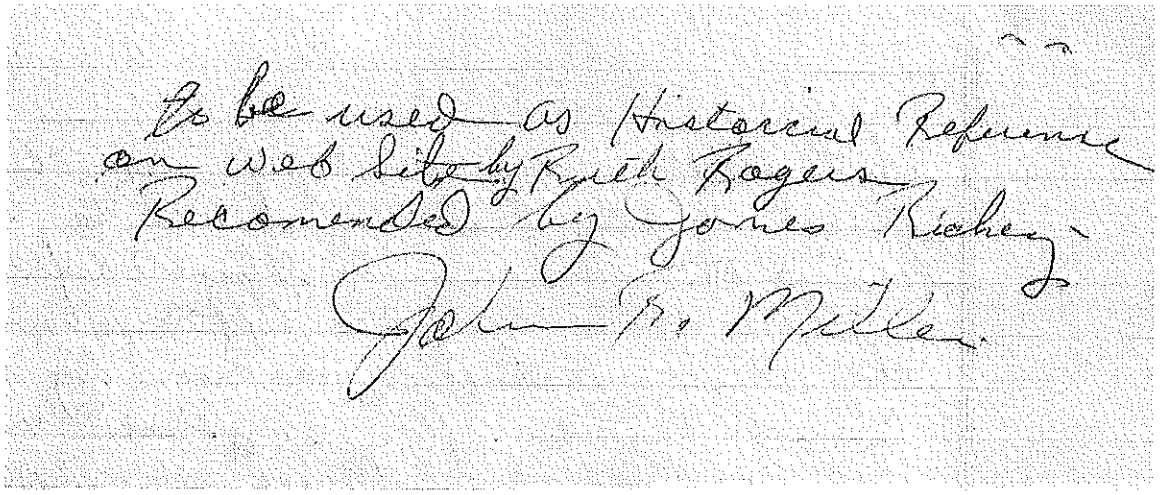
Anne Bell Cooksey

Nola Smith

Sam Miller

And one child who died.

The William Henry Jones family is shown in a portrait by well-known photographer Adolph Rapp in 1906. Jones was the publisher of the Glasgow Republican. Shown are William Henry and his wife Mattie Belle and children Bell, Annie and William B. Jr., who would succeed his father as publisher of the Republican. Courtesy of Libette Lawson.



Old George Bowman Home - Freedom, Ky

Where slurry first